

# LISTENING STATION music for abandoned structures and shakuhachi

For his first excursion into the world of the audio CD format, artist Thorsten Knaub climbed up a hill and into the main dome of the former US listening station at Teufelsberg at the outskirts of Berlin, Germany. His mission, to explore the particular reverb present in the dome through site-specific improvisation with the shakuhachi, a vertical, end-blown Japanese bamboo flute.

The shakuhachi with its sonic potential and long history, including an era it was used by a wandering sect of spying ex-samurai, seemed an appropriate choice to engage with the space. The patterns and phrases of the played music developed through an ad hoc and in situ performance. In this way the recording documents as much the searching for the next note as the result of this process, often literally, as due the long decay times inherent in the space, the sounds start to overlap and layer into more complex textures. Long notes, abrasive sonic gestures, incidental sounds of other people present in the building and the occasional rumble of a plane flying overhead, intertwine to sculpt a multi-threaded narrative between the shakuhachi, the space and its location.

Abandoned structures, buildings and defunct spaces, their architecture, a sense of location and a lot of other things were going through Knaub's mind while breathing into the flute and listening to the dome throwing back its response.

**Listening Station – music for abandoned structures and shakuhachi** caught and preserved these utterances, before all that was said faded away and dispersed into the realm of memory.



PLAYING INSIDE THE MAIN LISTENING DOME

## > THORSTEN KNAUB

London based Thorsten Knaub is a media artist and digital filmmaker. Recent projects include remaking his father's old tourist movie of 70s London, frame by frame (**London/London**), condensing a century of cinema into a 100-minute film (**The Cinema Machine**), and tracking himself a year long with a GPS receiver (**www.gpsdiary.org**). Knaub has presented his artworks and projects in countries including the UK, Europe and beyond. He received a MFA in Fine Art Media from the Slade School of Art in London (1997-99).

Knaub discovered the shakuhachi when encountering two Japanese musicians in India in the early 90s. Being fascinated and taken in by its sound and versatility, he, after settling in London, started to study the shakuhachi and was taught by, amongst others, the musician and composer Clive Bell.

## > LISTENING STATION

The listening station at Teufelsberg was one of the main stations used to spy and listen in to Eastern Bloc nations' radio communications during the cold war era, but after the fall of the Berlin Wall it became obsolete and lies abandoned ever since. The hill Teufelsberg (80m) itself was built by the Allies after the Second World War from the rubble of Berlin - rubble from an estimated 400,000 buildings - and is situated in the Brandenburg Plain.

## > SHAKUHACHI

The shakuhachi is a vertical, end-blown Japanese bamboo flute, tuned to a pentatonic scale. Its diverse and long history ranges from being used as a meditative tool by Zen Buddhist priests, a weapon for self-defence by wandering and sometimes spying ex-samurai, and an instrument for folk music and traditional ensemble music. It is also valued as an instrument within the contemporary musical context and among avant-garde composers.

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Site-specific improvisation with shakuhachi (japanese bamboo flute)  
recorded in the main dome of the former US Listening Station at Teufelsberg, Berlin.

1. Improvisation I 9:49
2. Improvisation II 5:21
3. Tamuke 6:37
4. Improvisation III 11:33
5. Improvisation IV 11:15

All music by **Thorsten Knaub**  
except Tamuke (traditional)

Audio mastering by **Pino Di Nardo**  
AVANTMIX London

CD produced & designed by **Thorsten Knaub**



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and selected shops from October 2011  
Further details at [www.thorstenknaub.com](http://www.thorstenknaub.com)

**Contact:**  
Thorsten Knaub

[info@thorstenknaub.com](mailto:info@thorstenknaub.com)  
+44 (0) 207 247 1793